

Movie Makers

January-February, 2001

Volume 11 No. 1

The American Motion Picture Society

An Important Letter from Roger Garretson, AMPS Secretary/Treasurer

Dear Members:

It is with a great deal of sadness that I have to report a tragedy that occurred to the membership records of AMPS.

Sometime in October, my computer was infected by a virus that destroyed over 200 files. The particular type of virus was called a "worm" and progressively works its way through your files. Obviously, I have learned a very valuable lesson from this experience, but unfortunately, it isn't retroactive, and the damage is done.

As a result of this virus, all the membership records of AMPS have been lost.

I have rebuilt them using a hard copy of our files, but, the hard copy is

several months old and obviously is not totally accurate. Here is where I am asking for your help. Will you please contact me and let me know the status of your membership. . One word of explanation, the expiration date as posted on this issues label, reflect our available information. It is located in the top right side of the label. (Exp. 1-00) If no date is shown, I do not have current information. Please let me know what your records show for that date.

In the event that you have allowed your membership to expire, we would like to invite you back into the fold, of course, we have to ask for your dues, which are now \$10 for the year for USA members, \$11 for Canadian and \$13 for foreign members.

I apologize for this catastrophe and hope I can count on your assistance.

Roger Garretson, Secretary/
Treasurer
30 Kanan Rd
Oak Park CA 91377

AMPS Winners Reel

To see the winning entries in this year's festival, send a check or money order for seven dollars for U.S. orders and \$10 for International orders, made out to the American Motion Picture Society.

AMPS mailing address is 30 Kanan Rd. Oak Park, CA 91377-1105.

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Movie Makers

Dedicated to the interests of the Serious Motion Picture Maker.

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Membership price per year is \$10.00, Canada \$12.00, foreign addresses \$13.00, all payable in U.S. funds or equivalent. Articles may be copied when the source is given. Back copies are available at .80 cents post paid.

George W. Cushman
Founder
1909-1996

Matt Jenkins, Editor

The AMERICAN MOTION PICTURE SOCIETY is not connected with any other organization, society, club or association. The Society does not offer dual, club, nor group memberships.

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From the Editor

Recently, I had the opportunity to dust off my Arriflex BL (a 16 mm camera for you video people.) People from The Sundance Channel came calling. They produce a program called "Conversations in International Cinema." This program airs on the Sundance cable channel. In this particular episode, the actor Ed Harris ("Abyss," "Apollo 13," "The Truman Show," "Milk Money") was interviewed. Apparently he is from Walters, Oklahoma a small town near me.

The Sundance people wanted some footage of Walters to air along with the interview. In particular, they wanted a barber's pole, a dress shop, and views of the Oklahoma plains. I was told not to use a tripod and to have lots of movement to make the footage have a "home shot" quality. And of course they wanted it yesterday. I assured them I could send digital video to them ASAP. No, they wanted film.

I was sent a four hundred foot roll of Kodak Tungsten negative 16 mm film to shoot with. Questions flooded my brain. They sent indoor film, to use outside? Do I still have my color correction #85 filter? Will I be able to properly thread my Arriflex? Will

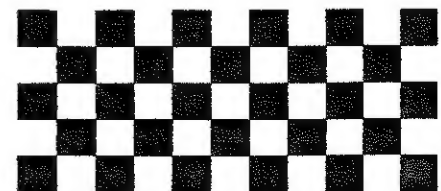
I be able to achieve the proper aperture opening? Will I unknowingly have light leaks? Do my batteries still work? Do I have cores to thread the film to? Where am I going to find a barber's pole, dress shop and the other things? I was stressing pretty hard.

To cover myself, I shot in both 16 mm and in digital video. Well, I still had my #85 filter. After practicing with a "dummy" load, I successfully threaded my Arriflex. I believe I had the proper f-stops and I don't think I had light leaks as I taped the heck out of the Arriflex with surgical tape. My batteries worked. I had film cores. And I was able to shoot everything but the windmill and sunset. I couldn't find one! And as for the sunset, Oklahoma has spectacular sunsets but I was unable to film one as the skies were overcast.

I sent in the exposed, undeveloped film. I haven't heard back so I guess everything went well. The best part was, I loved every single minute of it.

As always you may e-mail me at mattj@cameron.edu.

Matt Jenkins



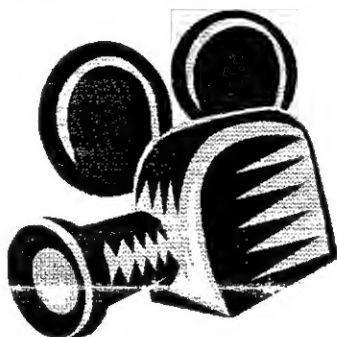
A Letter to Roger Garretson

Editor's note: This letter was recently sent to AMPS Secretary/Treasurer Roger Garretson.

Dear Mr. Garretson:

Please forgive me for being so late in paying my dues. I have been very busy with other things and have in fact been turning over in my mind the idea of dropping my membership. You see, I do not attempt to make films for entertainment or to enter into contests. I was at first fascinated by motion picture photography. Because it really could bring memorable events back to life. In the summer of 1936 a friend of mine bought a Victor Model 3 16 mm camera from Central Camera Co. in Chicago. I shared with him the new experience of photographing with a movie camera and in 1937 also the thrill of making movies in color with the new film, Kodachrome. We soon realized that film was pretty expensive and Tom began looking at ways to reduce the cost of film. He bought positive film for about 2 dollars per 100 ft. and with the use of a homemade drum, he reversed it in his basement darkroom. The lack of an anti-halation backing was

somewhat a disadvantage but at least our experiments did not cost so much. My friend immediately expanded his hobby as soon as we were out of college, but to me it was a luxury I could not afford. I did not make any more movies until 1945. I borrowed my friends Kodak special to photograph our honeymoon when Betty and I were married. In 1947 I bought a Keystone A-7 camera and we made movies of family events and travels for



many years. Finally in 1979 we shifted to Super 8 and then to Fuji Single 8 but the results were not nearly as satisfying as we obtained with 16 mm. I have ended this movie business with a Fuji Sound Camera, a Victor Model 4 and various sound and silent projectors – and a Panasonic VHS-C video camera. I transferred our old family films to VHS cassettes (5 of them) but I have not done much else with the video camera.

I recognized many years ago that the motion picture art form is unique. It is viewed in the dark and the mood of the audience is manipulated by music, so that extraordi-

nary concentration on the show seizes the audience. Video is an entirely different art form. It is viewed in a lighted room, usually in the presence of some conversation and other interruptions. The video presentation must constantly fight for the audience's attention and the magical effect of the music is largely lost. Often the audience is more interested in the picture quality than in the story that is being told. In the motion picture theater the music can cause the audience to overlook the picture quality while they concentrate on the story. Video has not interested me as much as movies, but I do appreciate the low cost of the tape cassettes. Single system sound has limited utility. It has been interesting but I cannot afford to continue to use film. I've seen digital video and I must say that is now the way the hobby must go.

I am still very much interested in the technical aspects of the hobby, but I don't feel I can make much of a contribution to the activities of AMPS. However, I do enjoy the knowledgeable writing in Movie Makers. Enclosed is my check for my 2000 dues. Sorry to be late.

Sincerely,

Carl A. Cline

Minor Considerations

No 12 – May 1993

George Cushman

When the moment arrives for a judge in a competition to select the picture he believes is the best he has seen, he often comes up with two, or even more, which he feels are of equal quality.

Or the panel of judges is confronted with a tie for first place.

How are these situations resolved? How does a judge decide which of the two excellent pictures deserves the top award?

LOOKS AT MINOR DETAILS

The solution is, he reviews the minor details present, or lacking, in the top runners.

Minor considerations are sometimes of major importance, yet overlooked as a picture unfolds.

The judge will remember the lighting, the one artistic concept the non-professional seldom considers important. Has only available light been used? Was there any attempt to use auxiliary lighting effectively?

BACKGROUNDS IMPOR-

TANT

What about backgrounds? How much attention was given to what is behind the action, or were scenes shot in a hurry with no regard for what also is showing in the frame?

Is the screen direction consistent, or does it vary to the detriment of the theme?

If it is a scenario film, were



the characters delineated cleanly? Was the introduction of the story or plot made clear? Did the story move or were there a lot of static "filler" scenes?

If it was a documentary, did the move well or was it bumpy? Did the narration stick to the subject and give information the picture could not show? Was the narrator's voice smooth and easy to understand? A small point, but in a tie it makes a difference.

CAMERA HANDLING

Was the camera-handling full of unnecessary zooms, lacking in close-ups when needed, panning to excess, scenes poorly composed, or camera hand held to a fault?

These are but a few of the many considerations a judge must face when confronted with a tie. The above will not apply to every picture but dozens of others will. And since judges look at these details in a close race, we all should, too, when we make and edit our masterpieces.

Here are some web site addresses that might be of interest to AMPS members. However, the Movie Makers Editor and AMPS leadership take no responsibility for the content of these sites.

Kodak:
Members can store pictures at this site.
www.kodak.com

The Yesterday USA Radio Network:
Streaming old radio dramas and programs.
yesterdayUSA.com

TV Party .com
Contains clips from TV shows from different decades. Might be some PG-13 and R rated stuff here.
www.TVparty.com

Videomaker on-line
www.videomaker.com

To Tell The Truth, Part 1

Stan Whitsitt

(Editor's note. This is part one of a presentation originally given at the 1994 SCCA-TBW-SAVAC &S Convention. It also appeared in the September-October 1994 Panorama. Thanks to Stan Whitsitt for its publication here.)

"The Cinema is truth twenty four times a second," I wish I'd said that, but I must confess I borrowed it from Jean Luc Goddard. Though he meant to describe film in general, in its purest sense it could be the definition of the documentary film.

A discussion of the documentary film should be a topic of interest to most amateur moviemakers. We don't use that term much to describe our work, despite the fact that probably 90% of amateur effort falls into that category.

What is a documentary? A dictionary definition describes

it as any film other than fictional, or story film, commonly called a scenario. The word is a derivative of the French "documentaire" which was originally applied to travel films. John Greirson, the well-known English documentarian, gave the documentary its ultimate meaning when he described it as "the creative treatment of reality." To document, literally means to "record." In producing visual documentary evidence, a work can be factual, presenting only surface values of a subject, but in the hands of a sensitive and perceptive producer, such films can become works of art. There are two broad classifications of documentary films I will discuss. These are each broken down by purpose or theme. First we have the straight documentary, also referred to as pure documentary, and then there is the scenic - travel or vacation documentary. The basic definition of the straight documentary is: A film of creative actuality...a factual film...a non-fiction film or a non-geographic type film. The basic definition of the scenic-travel documentary is: a film presented from the tourist's or vacationist's viewpoint, with a geographic approach. As we break down the basic divisions by function or treatment determined by the subject matter, the straight documentary can be:

1. A film that instructs, informs, or teaches on a non-geographic

object.

2. A record of an event or happening as it occurs...such as sports, shows or parades.
3. A dramatized recreation of historical events or facts of actuality...If a plot exists and a film is over 50% re-created, it should be considered fictional, or a scenario.
4. A descriptive film depicting a process, technique, or method.
5. A record film of a race or segment of a race, or comparison of races with detailed data on background, developed insight into their habits, customs, or culture. In other words, a complete biographic approach.
6. A newsreel type of film.
7. Experimental or art films.
8. Biographic films.
9. Nature films depicting lives, customs, habits, and so forth of animals, birds or insects.

In the scenic-travel or vacation film, the functional definitions would include:

1. A film that depicts a place or geographic area.
2. A record of a trip made by any means of transportation in use now or in the past.

(Continued on page 7)

Character Counts, Part Two

(Editor's Note: This is the second of a three part series on developing character. Look for part three in an upcoming issue.)

David Byland, Professor,
Oklahoma Baptist University

Last time we discussed the importance of observation in creating believable and meaningful characters when writing a script. After all, the audience should feel as if they "know" at least some of the characters in your film. The best way to do that is to observe real people doing real things and incorporate them into your script.

The second element necessary to create characters that count is "Fictionalization". The process might be described like this: first you play Sherlock Holmes and observe and record every detail about the people you see; second, you play H.G. Wells and create a fictionalized account of their activity in the setting in which you've observed them. This serves a couple of purposes:

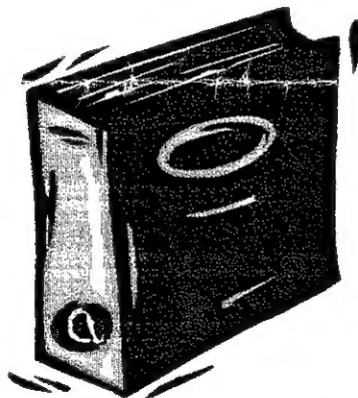
- It stretches your imagination by requiring you to make up a scenario out of the

things you've observed about the person

- It creates a "bank" of characters and scenarios from which you can withdraw future story elements.

Using our subject from the last article, let's see how this might work.

Observation: The 70-ish man is sitting on a bench outside a bookstore in the mall. He's slouched slightly to the right and has a short hair-



cut and a wart on his left nostril. He's wearing thick glasses. There is a "K-B Toy" bag next to him on the bench.

Fictionalization: This man is a grandfather who has taken his grandchild out shopping at the mall. It's been a long day and since the stroke he tires easily, but she wanted to go to the bookstore. He really can't read much anymore, but knows how much she enjoys it so he agreed to let her pick out a

book. He's waiting for her while she tries to decide which book she wants. As he waits, he hums the "Marine Corps Hymn", a song that carries great meaning for him. Having served in the Corps for 38 years, he still has his haircut by the base barber and shaves with a standard issue razor. He has his laundry done at the base too, since they know how to get a sharp crease in his trousers. But as much as he loved his time in the service, he's happy to be settled in one place now. He missed his own kids growing up, he wasn't going to miss his grandkids too.

So, where did this come from? Partly from the observation and partly from my imagination. I put this into the same spiral notebook I recorded my observations in and keep it for future reference. If I had observed a little girl I could two characters together by including her in the story.

Observation and fictionalization are important tools. However there is one more element I consider more important than either observation or fictionalization. To really unlock the secret of believable characters, a writer has to find the "Golden Key", and that will be the subject of the next article.

(Continued from page 5)

3. A film of a scenic nature with facts and data pertaining to flora and fauna.
4. A composite film, scenic in nature with possible disconnected areas tied in with a device or thread of a story.
5. A film of people and places, or of people in general, without going into detailed descriptions of customs...A passing through rather than "a lived with" approach.

You can probably see there is a certain amount of overlapping in the various treat-

ments, but consideration of these functions will give you flexibility as you plan your story.

Now here is a little history of the genre. In 1921, "Manahatta, a one-reeler inspired by Walt Whitman poem was made by still photographer Paul Strand, and a painter Charles Sheeter. This effort gave impetus to the form.

Robert J. Flaherty is considered the father of the documentary, as we know it. His "Nanook of the North," a study of Eskimo life, produced in 1922, is still capable of impressing contemporary audiences, and is still being

used as a teaching instrument in film schools. "Nanook" was Flaherty's second effort to film the Eskimos. His first attempt to film their life ended in disaster. During editing he dropped a cigarette on the negative. That early film had a cellulose nitrate base and seventy thousand feet went up in a flash. He was hospitalized with burns he received trying to put out the fire. His film involves the viewers in the life of his subject and poignantly captures the forbidding environment. The perpetually desperate plight of Nanook and his family becomes the dramatic core of the film.

Upcoming Festivals

Close Date	Festival Name and address for forms	Open to:	Subject	Format	Time Limit	Entry Fee	Award	Show Dates
2/23/01	Clearwater Int'l Film Festival, 411 Cleveland St, Clearwater, FL 33755 www.clearwaterfestival.com	ABC DEG		JK Note 2	none	\$35		N/A
3/15/01	Mississippi Valley Int'l Video Festival, %Dean Linnet, 2027 Quite Stream Dr. Maryland Hgts, MO 63043-2215 e-mail : lgdean@msn.com		open			\$10xx \$14yy \$16zz		4/5
7/701	Cotswold Int'l & Video Festival, %Lee Prescott, 37 Canberra, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, England GL10 2 PR e-mail: leepres@anglovideogxy.demon.co.uk				20 min AB 30 min G	\$13A \$8 B \$19G	TUVW	9/14-15
N/A Not Announced or not available								
ALL FORMATS ARE NTSC UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED								
A Amateur B College Student C Hi Sch or Grade School	D Independant E Com'l F Restricted	G Open	H S 8 J 16mm K Other L 3/4" M VHS	N SVHS O 8mm P Hi 8 Q MiniDV	R Regional S exceptions T Cash U Trophies	V Certificates W Other Award X Approximate Y It varies	xx yy zz	

At \$10, AMPS membership is still a great bargain. You receive six issues of the "Movie Makers" newsletter, you have an opportunity to contribute to the newsletter. And your membership helps supports the oldest continuously run film/video festival in the world.



Enclosed

NAME: _____

ADDRESS :

CITY, STATE, ZIP:

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

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